

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy (SNC or Conservancy) is a state agency within the Resources Agency created by bi-partisan legislation, co-authored by Assembly members John Laird and Tim Leslie, and signed into law by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in September 2004. It was created with the understanding that the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada and its communities are closely linked and that the region would benefit from an organization providing a strategic direction. The SNC is charged with a broad mission to be accomplished through a variety of activities in collaboration and cooperation with various partners.



The 2006 SNC Strategic Plan will guide operations over the next five years. The plan describes the vision, mission and guiding principles of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and provides a foundation for program development and activities to achieve the Conservancy's vision and mission. The plan meets the requirements of the statute creating the SNC (Public Resources Code Section 33345).

This Strategic Plan contains important information that defines the SNC and how it operates. Key information includes:

- An agency **Vision** describing the desired future condition of the SNC's jurisdictional area;
- A **Mission Statement** that reflects the charge given to the SNC by the State Legislature and the Governor;
- A set of guiding **Principles** that guide the operations and interactions of the organization;
- **External and Internal Assessments** that describe the context in which the SNC will carry out its programs;
- A series of **Organizational Strategies and Goals** that describe the steps necessary to create a successful organization;
- A set of **Programmatic Goals and Actions** that create a sound foundation for the implementation of various programs the SNC is empowered to carry out; and
- A **Glossary** that defines key terms used by the SNC in this document.

This is part one of a two-phase plan. Specific timeframes for program goals and actions and project concepts will be developed in the next phase of planning. The program areas are defined by law as are specific duties and limitations.

This plan was created through an open and transparent process that included six public workshops (one in each subregion). Following the workshops, the Board reviewed the plan its June 1, 2006, meeting and authorized this revised plan for additional public review. This second public comment draft reflects public comments and Board direction. Final approval is anticipated at the July 20, 2006, board meeting.

The SNC will modify the plan as needed to adapt to new information, changed circumstances and unanticipated events. Any plan modifications will continue to be made through an open, public process. The plan will be reviewed annually to determine progress, with a comprehensive review occurring at least every five years.

A copy of this plan and other information about the strategic planning process and the Sierra Nevada Conservancy may be found at www.sierranevada.ca.gov.

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ABOUT THE SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY

Thoughts about the Conservancy

The 25 million acres of the conservancy reach from Kern County to the Oregon border.

The Conservancy will not only support environmental preservation but assist the regional economy, preserve working landscapes and provide increased opportunities for tourism. It will serve as an example of economy and environment in harmony.

The 25 million acres within the new conservancy are a gift to the people of California, a gift that we have now guaranteed will keep on giving. Our children and grandchildren, visitors from far and wide, will see and enjoy the same Sierra Nevada that we value so much today.

*Governor
Arnold
Schwarzenegger
September 27, 2004*

Vision

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy's vision for the future is:

The magnificent Sierra Nevada Region enjoys outstanding environmental, economic and social health with vibrant communities and landscapes sustained for future generations.

Features:

- Rich and diverse natural, physical and living resources are protected and conserved.
- Healthy, diverse and economically sustainable local communities thrive, prepared for and protected from natural disasters.
- Californians value and invest in healthy watersheds that provide high quality water, spectacular scenery and important wildlife habitat.
- Sustainable working landscapes provide environmental, economic and social benefits to the region.
- The region's cultural, archeological and historical resources are preserved, visited and treasured.
- Healthy and sustainable tourism, recreation and commercial activities are valued and encouraged.



Mission Statement

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy initiates, encourages, and supports efforts that improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the Sierra Nevada Region, its communities and the citizens of California.

Description

The SNC is a State agency within the Resources Agency. The Conservancy's service area covers approximately 25 million acres, nearly 25% of California's land area, making it the largest conservancy in the state. The SNC jurisdiction includes the mountains and foothills of the Sierra Nevada range, and certain neighboring areas including the Mono Basin, Owens Valley, the Modoc Plateau and a part of the southern Cascade region.

For purposes of this plan, the terms "Sierra Nevada Region" and "region" includes all of these areas.

The service area covers all or portions of 22 counties, from Modoc County in the north to Kern County in the south. It is one of the most significant natural and biologically diverse regions (with related socio-economic benefits) in the world.

Governance

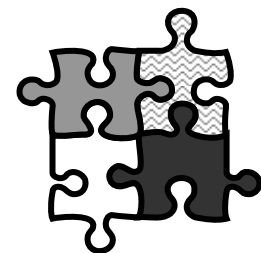
The Conservancy is governed by a 16-member board, including 13 voting members and 3 nonvoting liaison advisers, all appointed under Public Resources Code section 33321. Members include:

- State Secretary for Resources (or his/her designee)
- State Director of Finance (or his/her designee)
- Three members of the public appointed by the Governor
- Two members of the public, one each appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Rules Committee
- Six county supervisors whose districts are within the region, each representing one of the six Sierra Nevada subregions
- Three non-voting Federal liaison advisers, one each from the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management

Things the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Can Do:

- Award grants and loans;
- Develop projects and programs designed to further its purpose;
- Facilitate collaborative planning efforts;
- Enter into agreements and contracts with willing participants;
- Encourage and initiate coordination, collaboration and cooperation among interested parties; and
- Provide technical information, expertise, program and project development and other non-financial assistance.

(For more detailed on Conservancy authority see Appendix B)



Program Description

The law creating the SNC outlines its mission. All the SNC activities are based on the principles of balance, cooperation and equity. The SNC will:

- Support efforts that advance environmental preservation, and the economic and social well-being of Sierra residents in a complementary manner;
- Work in collaboration and cooperation with local governments and interested parties in carrying out the SNC's mission; and
- Make every effort to ensure that, over time, Conservancy funding and other efforts are spread equitably across each of the various subregions and among the program areas, with adequate allowance for the variability of costs associated with individual regions and types of projects.

Program Areas

The statute creating the SNC provides for seven specific program objectives (using the precise language from the statute and not in priority order):

- Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation;
- Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources;
- Aid in the preservation of working landscapes;
- Reduce the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfires;
- Protect and improve water and air quality;
- Assist the regional economy through the operation of the Conservancy's program;
- Undertake efforts to enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

This Strategic Plan guides programs, activities and projects necessary to achieve these goals.

Project Concepts Identified by the Public

Public Workshops

During a series of workshops in 2005, members of the public suggested a number of possible activities appropriate for the SNC.

The list (see box this page), in alphabetical order, offers a small sample of the types of projects and activities the Conservancy could consider to improve and enhance the region (See Appendix C for a full list of activities meeting attendees suggested could be considered for the SNC's projects).

In April 2006, a first draft Strategic Plan was released to the public. Significant public input was received at six public workshops and additional written comments and suggestions were received by the SNC. The Board discussed public comments and gave staff additional direction at its June 1st meeting. The June 2006 Public Comment draft reflects feedback from all sources. Appendix D includes a summary of the public meetings. Key comments included:

- Make the vision statement more descriptive of the grandeur and uniqueness of the Sierra. Be more specific about natural resources, watersheds and wildlife habitat. Capture the importance of the Sierra to the rest of the state. Stress the need for integration of environmental, economic and social goals.
- Shorten the mission statement to express the essence of the SNC mission. Make it more action-oriented and capture its importance to the entire state.
- Make it clear that the SNC is an organization committed to collaborating and cooperating with all partners in order to carry out its mission.
- Make it clear the SNC will play an active role in coordinating and facilitating the

Small Sample of 2005 Public Generated Project Concepts

- Communications: high-speed internet; teleconferencing; environmental education
- Funding: easements; critical acquisitions of high resource value lands; public lands maintenance and improvements
- Infrastructure: public transportation; water and wastewater systems
- Resources: hunting and fishing opportunities; interpretative scenic byways; bike trails; water and air quality; forest health and sustainable forestry; fuels reduction/fire safe activities
- Socioeconomic: health care quality and access; arts in the region; housing affordability/availability; community and visitor centers; agricultural, historical, cultural and ecological tourism
- Technical Assistance: local government land use planning; preservation of community character, cultural resources, historical buildings and settings; grant writing; promotion of tourism
- Other: the public also suggested SNC could provide a neutral forum for policy discussions; and increase overall effectiveness of the region by supporting research and monitoring of initiatives

activities in the Sierra of various state and federal agencies, recognizing and respecting the agencies' responsibilities to carry out their missions and in convening various parties to address key issues.

- Strengthen the plan's approach to communication and education as it relates to the importance of the Sierra Nevada to the rest of the state.
- More clearly identify the importance of recognizing the link between the environmental, economic, and social well-being and the SNC's commitment to achieving all three in a complementary fashion.
- Refine Organizational Goals to:
 - Emphasize working with all partners;
 - Stress the use of existing information and infrastructure to address community needs;
 - Support local, regional, and subregional planning efforts; ensuring the SNC does not supersede local efforts;
 - Increase the understanding of the Sierra Nevada's importance statewide; and
 - Recognize funding may be uneven, limited and targeted, but over time equitable.
- Regarding Program Goals: be clear the list is not in priority order. Revise and augment the list of actions to reflect ideas noted in meeting summaries (Appendix D).

Decision Making and Monitoring

The Conservancy will use best available information and science in decision making and will frequently assess the effectiveness of its programs. The SNC will build upon existing information and identify where key gaps or weaknesses may exist. Information useful in decision making will be collected and made available for use by others.

The SNC will provide for research and monitoring activities in support of its mission. Monitoring will allow the Conservancy to refine or modify programs and promote adaptive management based on the results.

Agency Funding Sources

The SNC's base budget¹ currently consists of funding from the California Environmental License Plate Fund. Additional funding for the implementation of the Conservancy's programs is expected to come from future bond funding and/or other special funding sources. The SNC may also receive land and resources from gifts, bequests or donations.

¹ The state authorized budget for basic operational needs.

AGENCY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The SNC has a number of principles that serve to guide the organization's operation into the future:

How We Operate

- We conduct operations openly. Decision making will be transparent, and we always strive to improve communications throughout the region.
- We strive to maintain neutrality so all interested parties are provided an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the SNC's activities.

Our Key Objectives

- We seek to "add value" and build upon existing community and regional efforts.
- We bring a regional focus to the issues of the Sierra Nevada Region, collecting and sharing information across the region and communicating the benefits and contributions of the region.
- We encourage community-based solutions and will assist communities with technical expertise, information and resources necessary to achieve local solutions.
- We use best available information and science in making decisions, identifying opportunities to fill information and technical gaps and building on and expanding community information.
- We will inform and educate the public about the important contributions the Sierra Nevada Region provides to all Californians, including providing clean water for many uses outside the Sierra, access to world-class recreation and tourism and the production of a variety of important commodities.
- We strive to identify and implement activities that result in integrated environmental, economic and social benefits rather than "either or" outcomes.

Implementing Our Programs

- We develop program priorities considering the input received through community outreach efforts and seek to meet community needs, recognizing local and regional differences, through program and organizational flexibility.

- We give priority to multi-benefit projects and integrated activities (those that address more than one of the SNC's program objectives).
- We encourage projects and activities that leverage other organizations' (government, private and non-profit) competencies and funding.
- We evaluate projects considering what is occurring on surrounding lands, cognizant of potential impacts to those landscapes.
- Where possible, we purchase and/or create incentives for the purchase of resources for goods and services within the Sierra Nevada Region. We diligently seek opportunities to improve the economic well-being of communities in the region.

Working With Others

- We emphasize cooperation with local governments and other governmental and non-governmental partners in providing information, technical assistance and financial support to assist in meeting mutual goals.
- We coordinate and collaborate with all partners to achieve research, project funding and program goals.
- We convene and facilitate interested parties to seek solutions for difficult problems to achieve environmental, economic and social benefits.
- We respect the mission, responsibilities and obligations of other agencies and organizations.

AGENCY ASSESSMENT

As a new organization, the SNC needs to create strategies and actions that recognize the many factors that may affect organizational effectiveness. The assessment below, based on a review of existing information from numerous sources and public input, summarizes key factors.

External Assessment

One of the most significant natural and biologically diverse regions in the world, the Sierra Nevada Region constitutes about 25% of California's land area. It serves as home to over 600,000 Californians, and provides recreational opportunities for millions. The region also:

1. Provides more than 60% of California's most valuable commodity - water, the vast majority of which is used for residential, agricultural and environmental uses outside of the region;
2. Supports 212 communities dependent upon natural resources for jobs, recreation, and community character;
3. Sustains a growing tourism industry involving more than 50 million recreation visit days a year;
4. Supports half of all plants found in California;
5. Provides habitats for 66% of the bird and mammal species and about 50% of the reptile and amphibian species in California;
6. Is home to more than 400 species of terrestrial vertebrates and in excess of 320 species of aquatic invertebrates (the region contains more endemic aquatic invertebrates than any other ecological region in the world); and
7. Produces from 33% to 50% of the State's annual timber supply.

Environmental, Economic, and Social Challenges

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been paid to the significant environmental, economic and social challenges facing the region. In fact, the creation of the SNC was largely a product of this recognition.

Key Sierra Nevada Facts

- The Sierra Nevada is the third fastest growing region in California. Some estimates predict the population will triple by 2040. The area is experiencing rapid retiree and commuter resident growth, and large intermittent recreational populations that increase resource pressures.
- For some time, the Sierra Nevada's economy has been diversifying from primarily a resource-based economy to one increasingly dependent on tourism and related services; specialized goods and services tied to the state economy; and health, financial, and other services needed by the growing population.
- Many parts of the region face significant threats from natural disaster, in particular the risk of catastrophic fire.
- There is increasing conflict over various land use decisions in certain portions of the region and over regional resource conservation strategies.
- In some Sierra communities there is a lack of affordable housing, declining personal income, low literacy rates, and outdated communications infrastructure.
- In some subregions there are a growing number of children in poverty.

The scale, scope and complexity of resources, funding and institutional needs exceed the current capacity of the existing public programs and private nonprofit sector. The current situation presents many challenges to Sierra communities in addressing natural resource and community needs and has resulted, or could result, in the following:

Institutional Challenges	Resource Challenges
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Relative lack of public funding committed to the Sierra Nevada Region (excluding Lake Tahoe); the area received only about 1% of all State bond funds designated for conservation purposes from 1996-2001; 2. Lack of institutional and funding capacity to deal with the region's issues. Many local and State agencies have difficulty meeting basic needs because of budgetary shortfalls. Many local governments and organizations in the region need technical assistance and funding to develop and implement projects; 3. Lack of cohesive and comprehensive State policy on investment objectives for acquisition, restoration, economic development, recreation and tourism, and resource management activities within the region; and 4. Lack of knowledge about the importance of the Sierra Nevada Region by a majority of Californians living outside of the area. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rapid population growth in some areas break up the ecosystem and working landscapes and increase the risk of wildfire along the wildland-urban interface; 2. Job losses in industries such as timber, agricultural and ranching, along with the reduction in mining activity, place additional economic burdens on many communities that are distant from the metropolitan economies on either side of the region; 3. Impaired water quality in many of the Sierra Nevada's rivers; 4. Adverse effects on land and water species and their habitat, many of which are already facing declining health and numbers; 5. Lack of affordable housing in many communities, particularly workforce housing; 6. Reduced access to quality health care; 7. Loss of historical and cultural character of communities; 8. Lack of needed community infrastructure and public services such as roads, quality health care transportation systems, wastewater treatment, and storm water management; and 9. Adverse impacts of climate change on natural resources, watersheds and local economies in the Sierra.

Positive Signs

Even with these significant challenges, progress is being made within the region. The past decade has seen a substantial increase in collaborative planning efforts by government agencies and the non- governmental community. There are a substantial number of public and private groups, (representing business, the environment, tourism, healthcare, cultural efforts such as music, arts and crafts, ranching, and agriculture), governments, and other sectors, working collaboratively to come up with sustainable solutions. There are a number of local government efforts taking this approach to address complex resource and infrastructure issues.

Many groups have focused on watershed management, community planning, reducing the risk of catastrophic fire, preserving working landscapes and protection of wildlife habitat. In addition, many traditional land management practices have been modified to reduce the impact on the environment.

A 2002 survey recorded the following groups within the Sierra Nevada Region:

- **More than 22 operating land trusts and support organizations**
- **18 active resource conservation districts**
- **More than 20 Coordinated Resource Management Planning groups**
- **Approximately 75 community Fire Safe Council**

These efforts provide the SNC opportunities to partner, facilitate and collaborate, as well as leverage funds and resources to achieve common goals.

Internal Assessment

The SNC serves a broad range of purposes. In order to develop effective programs and set priorities, it must actively engage the public, government agencies, non-governmental partners and other interested parties with a particular focus on subregional outreach. This approach allows input on the strategic program planning, program guidelines and development, and provides important information as to changes occurring in the region.

In order to be successful, the SNC must determine where it can add value, building upon and enhancing community efforts and respecting responsibilities of other government agencies and organizations.

Large Area

The Conservancy's service area includes approximately 25 million acres and all or part of 22 counties. This area creates significant transportation, communication and operational challenges. An effective organizational response requires strategic deployment of the SNC's

resources and effective communication with the public and all partners.

Complex Institutional Setting

The SNC operates in a complex institutional setting. The Board composition includes the Executive Branch (Resources Agency, Department of Finance and 3 gubernatorial appointees), the Legislature (Speaker of the Assembly and Senate Rules Committee appointees), representatives from 22 counties, and 3 federal agencies (the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management). There are over 200 communities (more than 20 incorporated cities), 30-40 special districts and dozens of local non-governmental organizations within the region.

Program Diversity

Rather than patching together separate agency programs, the SNC will use a comprehensive and integrated approach to address regional and subregional needs. This approach will necessarily result in program diversity and complexity. As noted earlier, the SNC is charged with seven distinct program areas that must be integrated in order to achieve the mission of the organization. There are a wide variety of tools available to address each area, recognizing the diversity that exists throughout the region.

The SNC's program complexity is magnified by rapid regional change, driven, in part, by population growth within and immediately adjacent to the region. Some estimates predict the population is expected to triple in the next 30-40 years. As the economic structure of the region diversifies from one primarily dependent on commodity-based industries to one driven by new services, the SNC's charge will require new approaches. For example, the potential conversion of working landscapes to residential and commercial uses would lead to increased demand for stewardship on remaining lands in order to receive the environmental, economic and social benefits provided by these lands. The Conservancy needs to be responsive and take advantage of opportunities resulting from various planning efforts.

An Emphasis on Consultation and Collaboration

The SNC is committed to working collaboratively and cooperatively with all levels of government, and a wide variety of partners, including non-governmental organizations and private landowners, in developing and implementing its programs. It will cooperate and consult with the City or County wherever a real property interest is being

acquired, and with public water systems. Additionally, is it necessary to closely monitor a host of Federal, State and local planning processes, as well as coordinate activities with other State agencies.

Complexity of Program Development and Implementation

The SNC is to be managed by clear and understandable guidelines that create a “level playing field,” (fair and even access to the SNC processes) for all interests. The guidelines will identify program objectives and the procedures and processes to be utilized in carrying out the programs. This Strategic Plan is the first step in developing these guidelines. They are to reflect analysis of program (resource)

where a project may affect the system.

requirements at the regional and subregional levels; institutional capacities; funding needs for each program; and an assessment of Federal, State and local plans for each program objective.

In order to create guidelines, the Conservancy will need personnel with sufficient expertise and adequate resources to:

- Develop and analyze regional, subregional and community information;
- Engage in required consultative and subregional liaison processes to determine needs and priorities;
- Review existing and potential funding programs affecting the region;
- Review and analyze project proposals;
- Provide technical assistance to local governments and non-governmental organizations; and

- Convene and facilitate willing parties with diverse interests and perspectives.

The Conservancy will also need highly developed communication and data systems to achieve program objectives, improve community capacity and provide for maximum public participation in Conservancy meetings and workshops.

Critical to a successful program will be an education and communications plan to support increased understanding of the region and subregions by all parties. By educating California citizens about the many benefits of the Sierra Nevada Region, the resource challenges and opportunities that exist and the need for their involvement, the public can assist in supporting efforts to improve the environmental, economic and social well-being of the region.

AGENCY FIVE YEAR ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIC GOALS

During the next five years the SNC will build an effective infrastructure to implement its charter, develop strategies, and set priorities for decision making on projects and site-specific activities. In order to carry out its mission, the SNC will focus on five key organizational areas:

- **Create an Effective Organization**
- **Use and Share Best available Information**
- **Increase Knowledge and Capacity**
- **Ensure a Balanced Portfolio**
- **Identify Funding Needs**

I. Create an Effective Organization

In its initial years the SNC must define key purposes, functions and project goals and create an organizational structure to support them. Immediate activities include hiring staff; adopting rules, regulations and guidelines for the SNC's operations; designing organizational

management structures; completing required reports and plans; and establishing the organization's facilities.

The SNC organizational structure will emphasize flexibility and recognize the Sierra Nevada's differences and similarities. It will address challenges of serving an area as large and diverse as the Sierra Nevada Region by focusing on its core mission and

through partnership with other governmental agencies and a wide variety of partners and interested parties.

The SNC will not supersede local efforts. Instead its efforts will emphasize community interaction and build on and enhance the existing infrastructure.

Strategic Goal 1

- Goal 1.1: Establish the SNC interim headquarters in Auburn. (April 2006)
- Determine location of a permanent headquarters location that will meet the SNC's needs and add economic value to the community. (July 2007)
- Goal 1.2: Establish satellite office locations based on available staff and resources and operational needs. (July 2007)
- Goal 1.3: Ensure an open and transparent decision making process by adopting understandable rules, guidelines, and procedures for the SNC's business. (Ongoing)
- Goal 1.4: Conduct a robust public outreach and feedback program within the region and in other key geographic areas important to the success of the program. (Ongoing)

II. Use and Share Best Available Information

The SNC will base decisions on best available information by engaging in data collection, analysis and sharing.

Numerous governmental agencies, non-governmental entities, educational institutions, and individuals maintain information to make daily decisions affecting the region. However, for a variety of reasons, the information is not always easily available to others. The SNC will collaborate with local decision makers

to determine information needs and define ways to make best available information readily available.

A number of entities have developed a significant amount of high quality regional research and information. The SNC will identify and incorporate as much existing data as possible into its information collection and dissemination efforts.

In addition to acquiring best available and necessary information, the SNC proposes to engage community leaders and others in defining information priorities, data

gaps and dissemination methods.

The SNC will make information widely available for use by others using multiple strategies and tools with an emphasis on internet and other emerging technology.

Beyond acquiring information and making it available, the SNC will focus on means to improve the overall capacity of communication systems in the region. For example, some areas in the Sierra Nevada Region do not have access to high-speed internet or even basic internet service at reasonable rates.

Strategic Goal 2

- Goal 2.1: Conduct an informational needs assessment of governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, private landowners, educational institutions, and other interested parties, to determine existing relevant information relating to the SNC's mission, significant information gaps and potential sources of new information. In doing so, the SNC will build upon and enhance existing information infrastructure. (January 2007)
- Goal 2.2: Assess preferred dissemination methods, technological needs and data limitations of the SNC's partners. Develop overall data acquisition and, dissemination requirements and a strategy to address the SNC statutory and organizational needs, with an emphasis on improving communities' ability to access and use information. (July 2007)

III. Increase Knowledge and Capacity

The Sierra communities have a rich history of self-sufficiency and resourcefulness. Currently, many local activities, consistent with the SNC's mission, are underway. The SNC will build upon these efforts and assist communities with building and creating capacity by providing information,

technical assistance, financial, and other resources.

The SNC recognizes goals and activities must be flexible enough to address the wide variety of regional issues and concerns and to adapt to new information or situations. Neither "one

size fits all," nor will static programs be effective.

Education efforts, demonstration projects, and research and monitoring activities designed to increase knowledge will be encouraged and supported.

Strategic Goal 3

- Goal 3.1: Conduct a regional assessment to determine existing and potential regional and community education, shared learning and research projects that the SNC can support and enhance. (January 2007)
- Goal 3.2: Based on the Goal 3.1 assessment and the information technology assessment, work with communities to develop a technological, communication, and technical assistance action plan. (July 2007)
- Goal 3.3: Support integrated regional and subregional planning efforts, consistent with the SNC's mission. (On-going)
- Goal 3.4: Develop an education and communications plan to support increased understanding of the importance of the Sierra Nevada within the region and throughout the state. (October 2007)

IV. Implement a Balanced Program

The SNC will place a priority on projects and activities that provide multiple benefits consistent with program goals. The integration of environmental, economic and social aspects will be encouraged and supported.

The SNC will make every effort to, over time;

allocate resources and activities equitably across the subregions and program areas. Even so, in the initial years of operations, the diversity, complexity and uniqueness of the region and the subregions might create challenges in achieving this objective. Funding limitations and restrictions

may also present challenges in achieving this objective.

The SNC will identify efforts and activities with region-wide application and benefit. This may include communication efforts, enhancement of information technology infrastructure and information collection and dissemination.

Strategic Goal 4

Goal 4.1: Develop, in collaboration with other organizations, environmental, economic and social well-being indices to monitor the progress in the various program and geographic areas. The indices will identify the key indicators to be monitored and measured and clearly identify performance standards. (June 2007)

Goal 4.2: Develop a program activity tracking system to ensure equitable distribution, over time, of resources across the region, subregions and programs. Recognize the need to act based on opportunity, available funding and regional differences. (January 2007)

V. Identify Funding Needs

Adequate funds will be essential to fully implement this Strategic Plan. The SNC recognizes that funding may be limited, inconsistent and targeted to certain program areas, depending on funding sources and appropriation by the Legislature. The SNC will fund essential activities and implement

this plan consistent with available funding and statutory requirements.

The California Environmental License Plate Fund is the base source of the SNC budget. The SNC will engage in a number of important activities using base funding including the hiring of staff, gathering and

disseminating important information and providing technical assistance. Additional funding (primarily for grants and loans) is expected to come from future bonds and other special funding sources. The SNC may also receive resources from gifts, bequests or donations.

Strategic Goal 5

- Goal 5.1: Develop and communicate funding needs of the region to the public, the SNC partners, and decision makers at all levels. (Ongoing, initial needs assessment by December 2006)
- Goal 5.2: Leverage and improve funding options and opportunities by identifying and communicating potential funding sources to those engaged in project activities consistent with the SNC's mission. (Ongoing, with an initial inventory of funding sources by October 2007)
- Goal 5.3: Identify and secure additional opportunities for stable funding sources for the SNC. (Ongoing)

AGENCY FIVE YEAR PROGRAMMATIC GOALS

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Program Goals

(These goals are listed as they appear in the statute and do not reflect a priority order)

- ➡ Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation
- ➡ Protect, conserve, and restore the region's physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources
- ➡ Aid in the preservation of working landscapes
- ➡ Reduce the risk of natural disasters, such as wildfires
- ➡ Protect and improve water and air quality
- ➡ Assist the regional economy through the operation of the Conservancy's program
- ➡ Undertake efforts to enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public

The statute creating the SNC charged the organization with seven program goals (see box on this page). This Strategic Plan identifies a set of actions which will serve as the foundation for development of specific strategies and projects designed to achieve these goals. The SNC will ensure that strategies and actions are integrated across program areas.

The SNC will develop program specific strategies and actions with measurable outcomes and specific timelines following approval of this plan by the Board. This blueprint for action will be developed in an open process, utilizing information gained from public input and other information gathering, development and analysis. These strategies and actions will recognize and address subregional differences and priorities.

Following are the program goals as identified in statute, with key actions identified.

Program Goal 1: Tourism and Recreation

Provide Increased Opportunities for Tourism and Recreation

The Conservancy's mandate to provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation is a clear recognition of the major economic contribution of these activities to the region and its communities.

Tourism and recreational opportunity are essential to the Sierra Nevada's changing economy and major contributors to economic growth. In 1999, expenditures by overnight campers for private and public campgrounds were over \$560 million, more than a sixth of such expenditures statewide.² These sectors continue to grow and provide more jobs and wages than many other sectors combined.

Between 1992 and 1998 the jobs generated by travel spending alone grew from about 6,500 to over 9,000.³

The growth is driven by the creation of new businesses and the expansion of existing ones, based on providing valued-added services on both public and private lands.

Recreational opportunities in the Sierra Nevada offer nearly every type of outdoor activity from camping to snowshoeing, hunting to bird watching, and rock climbing to motorized sports, plus everything in between. In fact, some estimates indicate there are as many as 50 million visitor days on public lands a year.

At the same time it is important to note that some forms of recreation can create impacts on natural resources, especially if not conducted consistent with prescribed rules and restrictions.

Likewise, increased tourism could create stress upon existing infrastructure in some Sierra communities.

Many communities have developed or are exploring "non traditional" opportunities, such as eco-tourism, agri-tourism and heritage related tourism. Also, the opportunity for additional recreational activities in the non-peak and "shoulder" seasons present viable options in many areas.

The SNC will work with communities on identifying opportunities that increase tourism and recreation consistent with sustainable practices and in recognition of community infrastructure needs. The SNC will encourage and support efforts that educate visitors on how to be good stewards of local resources.

Program Action 1

Action 1.1: Identify top priority tourism and recreational opportunities, including those in non-traditional activities such as eco-tourism, agri-tourism and heritage related tourism. Promote opportunities consistent with the integration of environmental, economic and social benefits.

² Fire and Resource Assessment Program (FRAP), Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Assessment, Socio-Economic Assessment, Wildland Outdoor Recreation Assessment. p. 31

³ FRAP, Assessment, Socio-Economic Assessment, Wildland Outdoor Recreation Assessment, p. 29

- Action 1.2: Develop and make available a comprehensive guide to recreational and tourism opportunities in the Sierra, in cooperation with other organizations within the region.
- Action 1.3: Identify funding sources relative to tourism and recreation that may be utilized to complement the SNC activities in order to achieve objectives.
- Action 1.4: Develop and make available a list of resources, consultants, organizations, etc. with skills, expertise and knowledge to assist communities with projects consistent with this goal.
- Action 1.5: Identify and promote opportunities to enhance recreational and tourism activities in the non-peak and “shoulder” seasons.

Program Goal 2: Physical, Cultural, Archaeological, Historical, and Living Resources

Protect, Conserve, and Restore the Region's Physical, Cultural, Archaeological, Historical, and Living Resources

The Sierra Nevada is a special place with many areas of interest. The extraordinary landscape draws residents and visitors. Few places on the planet have such beauty, ecological diversity, archaeological, cultural and historical assets.

Humans have wandered the Sierra for about 10,000 years, and have been a factor in the region ecology for 3,000 to 5,000 years. Early people used fire to improve the land for food, hunting and gathering and to generate plants to make baskets and serve other needs.

Later, the Sierra hosted California's famous gold rush, which marked a turning point in the Sierra's cultural, economic and natural history. During that period, a large number of people came to the Sierra. While pursuing their fortunes, many of today's communities were built.

At the same time, the practices employed by the miners severely degraded the Sierra's waterways and landscape, the effects of which are still problems in numerous areas.

Increasing pressures including growth, economic decline, the risk of catastrophic fire, climate change and decreasing water and air quality put these important resources at risk.

By 2040, almost 20 percent of the Sierra's current private forests and rangelands could be affected by projected development.⁴ Such conversion would put at risk, among other things, the Sierra Nevada's wildlife and ecosystem health and its rich cultural and historic treasures.

In addition, 68 percent of Sierra area forests and rangelands are ecologically at risk from wildfire.⁵

Catastrophic fire has profound environmental, economic and social impacts.

Climatic changes also present significant potential impacts to the Sierra's physical and living resources. Currently, even conservative projections of warming temperatures suggest a significant decrease in the Sierra snowpack and changes in precipitation patterns, which must be factored into planning efforts.

In order to protect, conserve and restore the region's living resources, it will be essential to promote ecosystem and watershed health. This will require an integrated approach recognizing the importance of terrestrial and aquatic habitats and the activities and conditions that may threaten their health.

⁴ FRAP Assessment Summary, p. 89

⁵ FRAP Assessment Chapter 3, Health - Wildfire Risks to Assets, p. 12

Program Action 2

- Action 2.1: Identify priority projects, partners and mechanisms, that protect, conserve and restore physical and natural resources, watersheds, wildlife habitat and other living resources.
- Action 2.2: Identify priority projects, partners and mechanisms that protect, conserve and restore cultural, archaeological and historical resources.
- Action 2.3: Identify critical information needs at the regional and community level to assist in assessing resource protection needs.
- Action 2.4: Identify specific funding sources that may complement the SNC activities in order to achieve program objectives.
- Action 2.5: Work in partnership with other governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other interested parties to identify information, assistance and resources needed to support community projects that protect, conserve and restore these important assets.
- Action 2.6: Develop a strategy to partner with local governments to identify information, technical assistance and resources that would be of value in local land use decision making.
- Action 2.7: Facilitate and foster good planning to protect and enhance ecosystem and watershed health, sustainable working landscapes and economically viable communities.

Program Goal 3: Working Landscapes

Aid in the Preservation of Working Landscapes

Working landscapes are lands that are managed to produce goods and commodities from the natural environment (most commonly farms, ranches and forests).

These lands often provide important contributions to habitat, biodiversity, water quality, air quality and open space that benefit everyone. Based on landowner skills, resources, and voluntary conservation and restoration actions, the benefits can be substantial.

Although management responsibilities and costs rest with the landowner, in many communities these lands are an important part of the local economy, culture and

social fabric. Working landscapes represent a scenic and historic asset for the region, covering approximately 36 percent of California's forests and rangelands.⁶

Many of these working landscapes are at risk because landowners have difficulty keeping their businesses economically viable. In many places, development pressure is strong and the potential economic gain for converting the lands to other uses is substantial. The resulting conversion of use is often detrimental to natural resource values that remain.

In some instances the management of public

lands in the area affect private landowners. Many are dependent on availability of government lands to create a scale of operation to make their own endeavors profitable. For example, in the Eastern Sierra 95 percent of land ownership is held by federal and other governments, 2.5 percent in ranches, and 2.5 percent in other private ownership.⁷ In this area many private enterprises rely on these public lands for ranching, recreation use, etc. In addition, government policies designed to respond to other resource issues can have unintended consequences and destabilize private working landscapes dependent on a mix of resources.

Program Action 3

- Action 3.1: Collaborate with governmental and non-governmental partners in identifying willing landowners interested in preserving their working landscapes through conservation easements and similar mechanisms.
- Action 3.2: Identify incentive-based programs (complementing and enhancing regulatory efforts) to assist in achieving sustainable environmental protection, natural resource conservation and working landscapes preservation objectives.
- Action 3.3: Identify opportunities for more cohesive public land management, including "checkerboard" ownership patterns, by identifying and facilitating potential voluntary land exchanges.

⁶ FRAP Assessment Summary, p. 75

⁷ FRAP Report to the California Biodiversity Council, September 18, 1997

- Action 3.4: Identify incentives for private and public landowners to manage the upper watershed to increase natural water storage and groundwater recharge.
- Action 3.5: Facilitate local, regional and state planning to encourage upper watershed conservation efforts that result in increased natural water storage, groundwater recharge and habitat improvement.
- Action 3.6: Provide regional perspective and coordination expertise to assist local planning efforts aimed at preserving working landscapes.

Program Goal 4: Natural Disaster Risks

Reduce the Risk of Natural Disasters, such as Wildfires

The Sierra Nevada geography, climate and vegetation make it particularly susceptible to natural disasters, particularly wildfires, floods, landslides, avalanches, and volcanic related events. Effective fire suppression efforts in recent decades have increased fuel build-up in many areas. At the same time active public land forest management (timber harvesting and fuels management) was also reduced.

As this occurred, substantial residential and commercial growth occurred in historic wildlands. Increased length of the wildland-urban interface increased natural disaster risks.

For example, 79 percent of housing units in the Sierra wildland-urban interface are at significant risk from wildfire (Very High or Extreme fire threat).⁸ Collaboration among local jurisdictions and local landowners may help affect future land use decisions that could exacerbate the problem.

In recent years, there has been an increase in efforts to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire on existing holdings. Substantial federal funding has been allocated to many of the Sierra Nevada's National Forests. Local Fire Safe Councils have been formed in many communities and there is a growing awareness of the fire

problem among local decision makers.

Similar investments are made for landslides and floods but often after a fire event. Due to changing land use patterns, official floodplain and other geographic hazard mapping are not always up to date and new construction occurs in those areas.

Some areas in the region face the risk of avalanche during the winter period. In addition, volcanic hazards are of particular concern to some parts of the region.

Sierra communities must also determine the potential effects of climate change and develop strategies to deal with those changes.

Program Action 4

- Action 4.1: Collaborate with state and federal land managers to identify projects and activities that will reduce risks of, and prepare for, natural disasters on public lands.
- Action 4.2: Assist communities in the development and implementation of firesafe community plans, flood prevention and other natural disaster prevention and response community-based plans. Collaborate with local governments and community-based organizations to create incentives for hazard mitigation and disaster planning.
- Action 4.3: Collaborate with federal, state and local fire agencies to identify opportunities for the SNC to assist in fire risk reduction efforts on private lands.

⁸ FRAP Assessment Summary, p. 102)

Action 4.4: In cooperation with local governments, identify strategies to reduce the presence of the wildland-urban interface.⁹

⁹ Where houses and other human development meet or intermingle with wildland vegetation and wildfire poses a significant risk to human lives and structures.

Program Goal 5: Water and Air Quality

Protect and improve water and air quality.

Water

The Sierra Nevada mountain range has numerous major rivers, hundreds of lakes, and thousands of miles of streams that form more than 30 watersheds. These watersheds are the lifeblood of California as they contribute over 60% of California's water needs, primarily to areas outside of the Sierra Nevada Region.

Many watersheds retain negative impacts from historic land uses, ongoing land use changes, and episodic, intense wildfires that have degraded water and air quality and aquatic habitat conditions. Historic mining activities also have significant water quality impacts from both sediment and heavy metals. In addition, some forms of recreation can create impacts on water resources, especially if not conducted consistent with prescribed rules, regulations and restrictions.

Today, new construction, mining, timber and range management, residential and commercial land use, and road construction are all activities that are regulated

to address impacts on water quality. Planning and regulation takes place at the state, regional and local levels. In addition, communities are facing issues such as wastewater treatment and storm water runoff that can affect water quality.

The SNC will work closely with the regulatory agencies and communities to determine efforts that will assist communities in improving water quality.

Air

While California faces some of the nation's most difficult air quality challenges, some Sierra communities enjoy some of state's cleanest air.

However, in the more urbanized areas of the Sierra Nevada, as in other parts of California, motor vehicles are significant contributors of air pollution. Some areas, most particularly in the foothill region, receive substantial additional negative impacts from urban pollution carried by wind.

Air quality issues in the Sierra are further complicated by the role of fire. Catastrophic fires can create substantial amounts

of pollution and can be particularly intense during active burning. At the same, land managers use fire as a tool to reduce the risk of wildfire through prescribed burns. Reconciling land management activities and air quality standards continues to be a challenge.

Climate Change

Issues involving climate change are especially relevant to the Sierra Nevada's water and air quality. Governor's Executive Order (S-3-05) notes increased temperatures threaten to greatly reduce the Sierra snowpack, one of the State's primary sources of water; and increased temperatures also threaten to further exacerbate California's air quality problems and adversely affect human health.

Even under lower emissions scenarios, the Sierra snowpack is projected to face significant decline in the coming years. A regional approach on how to adapt to climate change is necessary to protect our natural resources and local economies.

Program Action 5

- Action 5.1: Identify and support incentive-based programs that complement regulatory efforts to achieve environmental protection and community sustainability.
- Action 5.2: Identify and support priority projects aimed at assessing, protecting, and improving watershed health, particularly those that provide multiple benefits.
- Action 5.3: Develop and make available a list of funding sources, resources, consultants, and organizations with skills, expertise and knowledge to assist communities with projects consistent with this goal.
- Action 5.4: Provide incentives for watershed restoration projects resulting in upper watershed health, water quality improvement and water source conservation efforts.
- Action 5.5: Engage in cooperative efforts with agencies and other partners aimed at educating about, planning for and monitoring the effects of climate change on the Sierra Nevada Region.

Program Goal 6: Regional Economy

Assist the regional economy through the operation of the Conservancy's program.

The Sierra Nevada economy is rooted in its natural environment by tourism, recreation, sustainable resource management, the production of agricultural products and extraction of valuable minerals and building materials.

Many Sierra Nevada communities face ongoing economic challenges. At the same time, the changing local economies described earlier in this document present opportunities for greater diversification. Many

communities are in need of assistance in developing efforts to attract diverse, sustainable economic activity.

In carrying out its programs, the SNC will support developing the needed information technology and other communications infrastructure that will help attract economic activity, particularly activity that reinvests in the region.

The SNC will carry out its operations with an emphasis on providing

economic benefits for Sierra communities. This includes being a consumer in the local economy, by purchasing goods and services locally, conducting meetings and events in the region and assisting local businesses in gaining more state business opportunities.

The Conservancy will also play a role in fostering collaboration and cooperation among producers of regional goods and services to improve markets.

Program Action 6

- Action 6.1: To the maximum extent feasible, focus the SNC's expenditures and conduct activities within the Region, utilizing community businesses.
- Action 6.2: When investing in the SNC's information technology system and other infrastructure, consider approaches that will enhance capacity in the Region.
- Action 6.3: Identify resources and assistance that will benefit communities in efforts to improve their economic well-being.
- Action 6.4: Assist in growing and diversifying local economies that are compatible with the area's natural resources, through innovative investments and economic development that are regionally distinctive.

Program Goal 7: Public Lands

Undertake efforts to enhance public use and enjoyment of lands owned by the public.

Well over half of the Sierra Nevada Region is owned by a public agency, with the federal government being the single largest landowner. These lands provide substantial recreational opportunities for Sierra residents and visitors and simultaneously provide for the protection

of significant natural resources. The use of public lands by for recreation and tourism provides substantial economic benefits for many communities.

However, with public use come management challenges relating to law

enforcement, resource protection and development and maintenance of facilities. The SNC will work collaboratively with land management agencies to address these challenges and to increase the quality and diversity of use and enjoyment of public lands.

Program Action 7

Action 7.1: Support community efforts to identify specific opportunities for sustainable public use and enjoyment of public lands. This includes conservation and restoration projects that result in public use.

Action 7.2: Develop and support, in consultation with state and federal land managers, sustainable projects that meet this objective, consistent with the land management agencies' objectives and responsibilities.

Action 7.3: Develop and support partnerships with non-governmental organizations, tribal organizations, and other parties enabled or entrusted with responsibilities to manage or maintain public lands.

NEXT STEPS

The SNC will begin the implementation of this plan upon approval by the Board. Development of program guidelines, consistent with the goals and actions identified in this plan will also begin following adoption and will be done in an open process, provide ample opportunity for public involvement.

This Strategic Plan will be comprehensively reviewed within five years by the Board, although adjustments to the plan may occur prior to that if warranted because of new information or changing conditions. The Board will also review progress on implementing the plan annually to determine appropriate program adjustments. All changes to the plan will be made through an open, public process.

GLOSSARY

For the purposes of this plan, the following terms have the following meanings:

Adaptive management: design and implement programs in a highly flexible manner, and revise management strategies depending on information gained from continuous monitoring to achieve desired outcomes.

Board: Governing Board of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Capacity Building: increasing the ability of a community, local government, or organization, to design, develop and carry out programs or projects.

Conservancy: Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Ecosystem: abbreviation of the term, ecological system; A collection of plants, animals and other living organisms, living together with their environment and functioning as a loose unit; a dynamic and complex whole, interacting as an ecological unit.

Fee interest, fee title, fee estate, or fee simple: outright title to, and dominion over, a parcel of land.

Fund: the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Fund, a special fund within the State Treasury for the exclusive use of the Sierra Nevada Conservancy.

Interested Parties: all parties engaged in, interested in or affected by the activities of the Conservancy. This includes, among others, tribal people, other government entities, private land owners, businesses, non-governmental organizations, social and cultural organizations, advocacy groups, fire safe councils, land holding entities and educational institutions.

Less-than-fee interest in land: an interest in land -- such as an easement, right-of-way, or leasehold -- which is less than the fee title, transferred by the owner of the fee title (or a predecessor) to another party (e.g., an individual, corporation, public entity, etc.)

Living Resources: biological resources, including plants, aquatic life, micro-organisms, birds, reptiles, animals and humans.

Local government: a city, county, district, or joint powers authority.

Nonprofit organization: a private, nonprofit organization that qualifies for exempt status, and that has among its principal charitable purposes preservation of land for scientific, educational, recreational, scenic, or open-space opportunities; or, protection of the natural environment, preservation or enhancement of wildlife; or, preservation of cultural and historical resources; or, efforts to provide for the enjoyment of public lands.

Region or Sierra Nevada Region: the area lying within the Counties of Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Lassen, Madera, Mariposa, Modoc, Mono, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Tehama, Tulare, Tuolumne, and Yuba, which is more specifically described in Public Resources Code section 33302(f), and excluding both of the following: (1) The Lake Tahoe Region, as described in Section 66905.5 of the Government Code (2) The San Joaquin River Parkway, as described in Public Resources Code section 32510.

Riparian: Areas adjacent to rivers and streams. Usually referred to when discussing animals and plants that require this type of environment to survive.

Shoulder Season: Refers to seasons on either side of high visitation seasons in communities with a strong tourism economy.

Subregions: the six subregions in which the Sierra Nevada Region is located, described as follows:

- (1) The north Sierra subregion, comprising the Counties of Lassen, Modoc, and Shasta.
- (2) The north central Sierra subregion, comprising the Counties of Butte, Plumas, Sierra, and Tehama.
- (3) The central Sierra subregion, comprising the Counties of El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, and Yuba.
- (4) The south central Sierra subregion, comprising the Counties of Amador, Calaveras, Mariposa, and Tuolumne.
- (5) The east Sierra subregion, comprising the Counties of Alpine, Inyo, and Mono.
- (6) The south Sierra subregion, comprising the Counties of Fresno, Kern, Madera, and Tulare.

Sustainable: an activity that can be repeated over a long period of time without causing damage to the environment or the community.

Sustainable Development: development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Tribal organization: an Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community, or a tribal agency authorized by a tribe, which is recognized as eligible for special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians and is identified on pages 52829 to 52835, inclusive, of Number 250 of Volume 53 (December 29, 1988) of the Federal Register, as that list may be updated or amended from time to time.

Watershed: an area of land that is entirely drained by a single stream or river. Smaller stream-based watersheds nest within larger river-based watersheds.

Wildland-Urban Interface: Where houses and other human development meet or intermingle with wildland vegetation and wildfire poses a significant risk to human lives and structures.

Working landscapes: lands managed to produce goods and commodities from the natural environment (most commonly farms, ranches and forests). For many communities, these lands are an important part of the local economy, culture and social fabric.

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Methodology Statement – Internal Planning Process

Appendix B: Summary of Agency Duties and Authorities

Appendix C: Summary of 2005 Community Meetings

Appendix D: Summary of 2006 Community Meetings

Appendix A: Methodology Statement – Internal Planning Process

This draft Strategic Plan was prepared in accordance with the California State Department of Finance Strategic Planning Guidelines. As a new organization the Conservancy was fortunate to receive information from variety government agencies, and non-governmental for profit and non-profit organizations and businesses. Many of the materials provided were incorporated in part or in whole in the Organizational Assessment and to prepare the program and goal statements.

Where direct quotes were used we attempted to provide the source document but also wish to acknowledge the many approaches and concepts graciously provided for this review by others.

In addition, the public provided initial input during testimony at Conservancy Board meetings, with written submissions, and during public workshops conducted in the region in 2005. This iteration of the document incorporates information gathered from the public including information from public meetings held in the region during April and May 2006, as well as direction from the Board provided at the June 1, 2006, meeting.

Appendix B: Summary of Agency Duties and Authorities

Overview

The Laird-Leslie Sierra Nevada Conservancy Act authorizes the Sierra Nevada Conservancy to “carry out projects and activities to further the purposes of this [Act] throughout the [Sierra Nevada] Region.” The Act directs the Conservancy to “make every effort to ensure that, over time, Conservancy funding and other efforts are spread equitably among each of the various subregions and among the state goal areas.” (Section 33341).¹⁰

The Act envisions the Conservancy will conduct its program “in cooperation with local governments, private business, nonprofit organizations, and the public” (Section 33301(d)).

Under the Act, the Conservancy has various powers and authority so it may carry out programs. Some key ones are:

- (1) Grants or loans to eligible entities (people, incorporated business and organizations, etc.);
- (2) Conservancy acquisition of an interest in land from a willing seller;
- (3) Restoration, enhancement, or improvement of land;
- (4) Transfer of an interest in land, e.g., for long-term management; and
- (5) Funding and facilitating collaborative planning efforts which involve interested entities and groups within the region.

In addition, the Conservancy is authorized:

- to provide technical assistance to eligible entities to support program and project development and implementation; and
- to conduct research and monitoring in connection with the development and implementation of the Conservancy’s program.

The Act also contains specific powers and authority relating to Conservancy income and revenue.

The Conservancy’s powers and authority are set forth in Division 23.3 of the California Public Resources Code, and are discussed in more detail below.

Summary by topic

Grants and Loans (Sections 33343-33344)

¹⁰ All section references are to the California Public Resources Code.

The Conservancy may make grants or loans to public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal organizations, in order to carry out the purposes of the Act. Conservancy grants or loans may be awarded for such purposes as:

- Developing projects and programs which are designed to further the purposes of the Act;
- Acquiring interests in real property, including both fee interests (absolute title) and less-than-fee-interests (e.g., conservation easements);
- Planning and designing the restoration, enhancement, or improvement of land;
- Carrying out the restoration, enhancement, or improvement of land;
- Conducting collaborative planning efforts.

Funds may be distributed only after the intended recipient enters into an agreement with the Conservancy. The Conservancy may require repayment of grant or loan funds and outlined conditions as appropriate. After approving a grant, the Conservancy may assist the grantee in carrying out the purposes of the grant.

Grants for acquisition of real property, and applications for such grants, are subject to various conditions. An entity that receives a grant or loan for acquisition of real property must provide for management of the acquired property.

Acquisition and Management of Interests in Land (Sections 33347 and 33349(a))

The Conservancy is authorized to acquire – but only from willing sellers or transferors – an interest in land, in order to carry out the purposes of the Act. However, the Conservancy may not purchase a fee interest (absolute title) in land, and it may not exercise the power of eminent domain (condemnation). If the Conservancy plans to buy an interest in a lot or parcel of land and it is worth more than a set amount (currently \$250,000), it has to be reviewed by the State Public Works Board.

The Conservancy must “take whatever actions are reasonably necessary and incidental to the management of lands or interests in lands under its ownership or control.” For that reason the Conservancy is allowed to make management agreements for the lands with public agencies as well as private parties.

Restoration, Enhancement, or Improvement of Land (Section 33349(b))

The Conservancy may “improve, restore, or enhance lands for the purpose of protecting the natural environment, improving public enjoyment of or public access to public lands, or to otherwise meet the objectives of this [Act],” and to “carry out the planning and design of those improvements or other measures.”

Transfer of Interests in Land (Section 33348)

The Conservancy may “lease, rent, sell, exchange, or otherwise transfer” interests in real property including vested rights which are severable from the property (sometimes known as “transferable development rights”).

Funding / Facilitating Collaborative Planning Efforts (Section 33346(a))

The Conservancy provide funds to facilitate collaborative planning efforts within the region.

Other Activities (Sections 33346(b) and 33351)

The Conservancy “may provide and make available technical information, expertise, and other non-financial assistance to public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and tribal organizations as it relates to its mission.

The Conservancy may also expend funds to conduct research and monitoring, in connection with the development and implementation of its program.

Consultation and Coordination (Section 33342)

The Conservancy shall cooperate and consult with the city or county, as the case may be, where a grant is proposed or an interest in real property is proposed to be acquired, and, as necessary and appropriate with a public water system. The Conservancy must also coordinate its efforts, as necessary or appropriate, with those of other State agencies,

Income and Revenue (Sections 33346.5 and 33352-33355)

The Conservancy may receive gifts, donations, an interest in real property, including an in-fee interest, subventions, grants, rents, royalties, and other assistance and funds from public and private sources. It may also fix and collect fees for direct services which it tenders, provided that the service is rendered at the request of the individual or entity receiving the service. The Conservancy’s may not charge more than the reasonable cost of providing the service.

All income from any source (including the proceeds from the transfer of any interest in land) is to be deposited in the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Fund, a separate fund within the State Treasury. The Legislature must authorize spending of the Fund. The Fund can only be used for the purposes of the Act.

Specifically Prohibited Activities (Sections 33347(c) and 33356)

The Conservancy may not exercise any of the following powers:

- Powers of a city or county to regulate land use.
- Any other powers to regulate activities on land (except when acting as the owner of an interest in the land, or under an agreement or other grant of authority from the owner of an interest in the land).
- Any powers over water rights held by others.
- Power of eminent domain (condemnation).

Appendix C: Project Suggestions from 2005 Community Meetings.

Community Well-being

- Funding for easements
- Housing affordability/availability
- Need for community centers
- Access to Information Technology/Communications (high-speed internet, teleconferencing, etc.)
- Access to health care, improve health care
- Public transportation
- Preservation of cultural resources
- Preservation of historical buildings and settings
- Resource related activities/jobs creation (e.g.: biomass)
- Retaining community/historic character
- Encouraging of the arts in the region
- Assist local governments in land use planning efforts
- Assist communities with infrastructure needs (e.g.: water and wastewater systems)
- SNC to “buy local”
- Tribal rights and tourism
- Economic development for youth
- Promote small businesses
- Planning for new airport
- Preserve small communities

Tourism/Recreation

- Agricultural tourism
- Assist businesses and community in promotion of tourism
- Working landscapes tourism
- Historical tourism
- Ecotourism
- ADA compliant facilities
- Hunting and fishing opportunities
- Interpretative scenic byways
- Internet access to tourism/recreation opportunities in region
- Conversion of older infrastructure for recreational opportunities
- Assist state and federal agencies in increasing public access
- Develop visitor centers
- Balance recreational opportunities and resource development
- Assist with railroad trails, bike and walking trails

Resource Protection

- Assist in land use planning efforts of local governments
- Promote forest health
- Sustainable forestry
- Fuels reduction/fire safe activities
- Technical assistance and scientific data
- Land swap opportunities
- Environmental education
- Critical acquisitions
- Use of conservation easements for habitat protection and open space preservation
- Funding for public lands maintenance and improvements
- Water quality projects - build and clean community water systems
- Watershed management and river restoration
- Air quality projects

Education, Communication, Data Acquisition and Dissemination

- ID Native American archeological and cultural resources
- Compile project examples from other conservancies
- Provide technical assistance for grant writing, etc.
- Provide a neutral forum for policy discussions
- Facilitate necessary research and monitoring

Appendix D: Summaries from 2006 Strategic Plan Community Meetings

Introduction

In early 2006, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy initiated a strategic planning process. The preliminary draft of the Strategic Plan incorporated elements required by statute, as well as input received through numerous letters, reports and Community Forums conducted in 2005. Following the release of the preliminary draft plan, region-wide workshops were conducted to collect input and comments on refining specific elements of the Strategic Plan. These were held in each of the Conservancy six sub-regions during April and May of 2006. Participants were asked to comment on:

- Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles
- Organizational Goals
- Program Areas

An overview of the meeting highlights from each session follows. The summaries provide an overview of issues discussed at the session. The section captioned “new insights” within each section summarizes concepts and issues expanded or articulated differently than in other subregional meetings.

Jackson Workshop – April 25, 2006

Vision, Mission, Principles

■ Vision

- a. Add “natural resources” (“living resources” is not clear)
- b. Make more active, less passive; more motivating, less abstract
- c. Add “economic vitality” to last sentence

■ Mission

- a. Create/maintain balance between multiple (potentially competing) objectives
- b. Identify who “other interested parties” are – State and federal agencies, non-government organizations, and the public (throughout entire Strategic Plan)
- c. Make more active, the mission should include “protect”

■ Principles

- a. Be clear about SNC’s role and how it relates to local organizations and communities (regulatory v. advisory; does it own or manage land?)
- b. Working with Others – add NGOs, private interests, and the public
- c. Grassroots/local approach emphasized

II. Organizational Goals

■ Effective Organization

- a. Coordination across regions, agencies, and organizations is important
- b. Local liaison/presence/contact is needed
- c. Empower and work with local efforts

■ Use and Share Reliable Information

- a. SNC as clearinghouse
- b. Set standards for data reliability; standardize data collection

- **Increase Knowledge and Capacity**
 - a. Use and develop models based on actual data to make projections
- **Balanced Portfolio**
 - a. Change this title to something about Measuring and Monitoring
 - b. Emphasize public and private organizations
 - c. Make sure that indicators are “measurable and appropriate”
- **Funding**
 - a. Grant programs and applications should be user-friendly, easy to understand

III. Program Goals

- **Priorities**
 - a. Some advocated economic goals (new business and new dam construction), others advocated environmental goals (resource protection, rural quality of life)
 - b. Working landscapes, tourism and recreation, and the regional economy are all connected to protection of natural resources.
- **Program Actions and Approach**
 - a. Focus on community priorities and specific opportunities
 - b. Provide greater detail about programs – make goals stronger
 - c. Include public education and awareness as a goal (out of classroom educational opportunities for children, more interpretive spots for adults, convey local history to visitors)
 - d. Tourism and recreation goals need to address more than increasing visitor use (assess recreation assets, needs, and current level of use; increase the quality and variety of experiences; better manage current recreational use and public lands)
 - e. Link regional economy and tourism opportunities (agri-tourism and environmental tourism; commercially-based recreation access projects)

New Insights

I. Vision, Mission, Principles

- a. Vision: energize vision with a kick-off demonstration project
- b. Mission: local government includes school districts

II. Organizational Goals

- a. Organization: Some goals are long-term, some already completed – create a timeline
- b. Data: Use and develop models based on actual data to make projections
- c. Data: Indicators of well-being index should track jobs, housing balance, oak woodlands conversion
- d. Data: Need more information about groundwater in foothills

III. Program Goals

- a. Discuss quality of life in local communities – health and fitness (including addressing childhood obesity), safe places for recreation, and work/home settings
- b. Link land use planning to working landscapes and natural hazard areas

Exeter Workshop – April 26, 2006

I. Vision, Mission, Principles

■ Vision

- a. Add “natural resources”, emphasize wildlife and wildlife habitat
- b. Add “working waterscape”
- c. Stronger language on protection and importance of resources for the State

■ **Mission**

- a. “Other interested parties” seems to ignore the importance of NGOs, community organizations, and private interests in resource conservation – call out
- b. Facilitate collaboration and improved relations among Sierra Nevada stakeholders for seamless management and regional approaches

■ **Principles**

- d. Create effective network to collect and share information
- e. Emphasize involvement of local groups acting in concert with gov’t. agencies
- f. Specify how public participates in process, seek out input and information
- g. Education is important – interpretive signs and outreach to public and youth

II. **Organizational Goals**

■ **Effective Organization**

- a. Need to have a local presence, be innovative – use existing organizations to augment SNC resources; need reliable 2-way communication
- b. Significant community involvement in setting priorities, create a very transparent culture built on equity and collaboration; continually seek public input
- c. Provide definition of terms used in the Strategic Plan

■ **Use and Share Reliable Information**

- a. Improve uniformity of data collection, create effective network to collect and share information (consolidate data within a single clearinghouse)
- b. Define terms and what is included in various assessments; define “better” decision-making – what decisions?

■ **Increase Knowledge and Capacity**

- a. Create/maintain a database to catalogue all trails, improvements, unique locations to track progress/useful application of program

■ **Balanced Portfolio**

- a. Clarify purpose and content of index, include a full spectrum of indicators

■ **Funding**

- a. Grant guidelines should be simple, transparent, and equitable

III. **Program Goals**

■ **Priorities**

- a. Air and water are most important

■ **Program Actions and Approach**

- a. Work with local groups, help organize and facilitate better relations of agencies and community groups; local input into federal plans
- b. Education on the value and conservation of resources and public land; discuss threats – loss of working lands, habitat; use interactive websites; educate visitors
- c. Goals 2.4, 2.5 – Include communities and non-profit organizations (NGOs, local conservation groups, community economic development councils, etc.)
- d. Goal 4 – Funds should go more to on-the-ground efforts (treat landscape and vegetation to reduce fire hazards) and less to research
- e. Protect working landscapes and unique business community that exists in region; natural resources are basis for regional economy

New Insights

I. Vision, Mission, Principles

- a. Make vision and mission shorter, more personal; should be easy to memorize and quote
- b. Include soil, along with air and water in the vision
- c. Collaboration across management boundaries to create “green infrastructure”
- d. Look at other conservancies (e.g. Appalachian Conservancy) for models
- e. Consider aesthetic quality along with economic and environmental goals
- f. Remove “sound” from sound science

II. Organizational Goals

- a. Include education and preservation regarding cultural resources
- b. Goal 1.1 – Would be good to use “green” building accessible by public transportation, biking, foot

III. Program Goals

- a. Program Priorities – Recognize unique differences and values of valley, foothills, and mountains for all sub-regions
- b. Anticipate and respond to climate change and changing conditions
- c. Add goal directed at maintaining a healthy ecosystem and wildlife habitat; prevent introduction of invasive, non-native species
- d. Add program goal to preserve “Working Waterscapes”
- e. Include land use planning for Goals 3 and 4.2
- f. Assist communities with visioning; promote clean transportation, reduction of sprawl, and other methods for cleaner air and healthier, more walkable development
- g. Goal 1 – Reach out to non-traditional groups; emphasize diversity of users

Nevada City Workshop – May 10, 2006
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I. Vision, Mission, Principles

■ Vision

- a. Add “natural resources” (“living resources” is not clear)
- b. Make more active, less passive; more motivating, less abstract
- c. Add “economic vitality” to last sentence

■ Mission

- a. Create/maintain balance between multiple (potentially competing) objectives
- b. Identify who “other interested parties” are – State and federal agencies, non-government organizations, and the public (throughout entire Strategic Plan)
- c. Make more active, the mission should include “protect”

■ Principles

- a. Be clear about SNC’s role and how it relates to local organizations and communities (regulatory v. advisory; does it own or manage land?)
- b. Working with Others – add NGOs, private interests, and the public
- c. Grassroots/local approach emphasized

II. Organizational Goals

■ Effective Organization

- a. Coordination across regions, agencies, and organizations is important
- b. Local liaison/presence/contact is needed
- c. Empower and work with local efforts

■ Use and Share Reliable Information

- a. SNC as clearinghouse
- b. Set standards for data reliability; standardize data collection

- **Increase Knowledge and Capacity**
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New Insights

I. Vision, Mission, Principles

- a. Vision: energize vision with a kick-off demonstration project
- b. Mission: local government includes school districts

II. Organizational Goals

- a. Organization: Some goals are long-term, some already completed – create a timeline
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III. Program Goals

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- b. Link land use planning to working landscapes and natural hazard areas

Paradise Workshop – May 11, 2006

I. Vision, Mission, Principles

- **Vision**
 - a. Add “natural resources” (“living resources” is not clear)
 - b. “thriving places” should say “thriving environment”
 - c. include employment opportunities

■ Principles

- a. Working with Others – add NGOs, private interests, and the public
- b. Change “sound science” to “peer reviewed science,” science should be credible

II. Organizational Goals

■ Effective Organization

- a. Actively interact and participate with local agencies and programs (county councils, fire safe programs, NEPA/CEQA processes)
- b. Hire exceptionally competent staff

■ Use and Share Reliable Information

- a. Proactive outreach and communication; don’t rely on web and mail

■ Increase Knowledge and Capacity

- a. Reach out to existing organizations for information gathering and assistance

■ Balanced Portfolio

- a. Develop benchmarks; third-party monitoring

■ Funding

- a. Continuously expand reliable funding sources
- b. Clearing house for grants; streamline the funding and application process

III. Program Goals

- a. Work with existing organizations and local landowners
- b. Goal 1: Tourism should be sustainable, low impact (non-degrading)
- c. Goal 2 and 5: Include watershed education; develop a management policy for water
- d. Goal 6: include private sector encouragement (marketing, tax incentives, startup); need economic reason for project success; need infrastructure to buy local

New Insights

I. Vision, Mission, Principles

- a. Vision: energize vision with a kick-off demonstration project
- b. Vision: “sustainable natural processes” instead of “well managed public lands”
- c. Mission: local government includes school districts
- d. Principles: Some regions have little political clout; often impacted by the choices of others; have been short-changed on past bonds – help balance

II. Organizational Goals

- a. Organization: need balance of input from private industry and business – reach out to overlooked organizations (e.g., Christmas tree association)
- b. Data: assessments will be defined by resources and problems of interest – define boundaries for regional assessments
- c. Data: effective and cost-efficient technical review of proposals and information is critical – include citizens and staff on technical review board

III. Program Goals

- a. Develop short-term and long-term strategy for program goals
- b. Assist agencies in implementation of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act
- c. Coordinate public and private fire plans with county fire plans

<h2>Mammoth Workshop – May 23, 2006</h2>
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I. Vision, Mission, Principles

■ Vision

- a. Replace generic language by describing what makes the Sierra different, unique
- b. Use stronger verbs throughout, refer to sustainable ecosystems throughout
- c. Add “economic vitality” to last sentence

■ **Mission**

- a. Include references to cultural resources
- b. Identify “other interested parties,” add NGOs throughout
- c. Focus on measurable and tangible results

■ **Principles**

- a. Funding system should create collaboration and not a competitive system
- b. Keep it simple

II. Organizational Goals

■ **Effective Organization**

- a. Need project goals within first 2 years, not just staff and office
- b. Determine staffing and volunteer needs

■ **Use and Share Reliable Information**

- a. Terms need definition throughout, be more specific

■ **Increase Knowledge and Capacity**

- a. Education component should include outreach to all ages
- b. Education and advocacy to areas outside of the Sierra, where votes and money are
- c. Add economic, cultural, historical to list in index

■ **Balanced Portfolio**

- a. Define “fair” distribution
- b. Provide a strong element of accountability back to communities

■ **Funding**

- a. Get information out to public
- b. Collaborate to advocate for funding for the Sierras

III. Program Goals

■ **Priorities**

- a. Tourism, protection of resources, and public lands are interrelated

■ **Program Actions and Approach**

- a. Integrating all program areas is what is going to work – generate creative synergy
- b. Tourism infrastructure needs to meet existing (then future) demand
- c. Focus tourism on place-based activities that are true to environment, history and culture; promote education and visitor stewardship
- d. Preserve wetlands and water resources
- e. Enhance access, as well as use, to public lands
- f. Streamline permitting for project and enhance planning
- g. Shift from extraction-based to sustainable economy; nurture local entrepreneurs

New Insights

I. Vision, Mission, Principles

- a. Healthy communities tie to the concepts of sustainability and diversity
- b. Communities “prepared for” natural disasters, instead of “protected from”
- c. Include workforce housing
- d. Collaboration and cooperation with “and among”
- e. Residents take leadership, accountability and participate

II. Organizational Goals

- a. Outreach: Need outreach to different cultures and communities
- b. Build creative tension to break down “silo” (separate interest) thinking
- c. Decisions and information in a timely manner; short deadlines are difficult in rural areas

III. Program Goals

- a. Do No Harm – no implementation of one program to detriment of others
- b. Global warming should be woven throughout program goals
- c. Restoration projects should have stand alone priorities (e.g.. invasive weeds)

Alturas Workshop – May 25, 2006
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I. Vision, Mission, Principles

■ Vision

- a. Integrate environment and economy – create balance between protection, enhancement and use of resources
- b. Add: healthy and diverse landscapes that are sustained over time; protected wildlife habitat and ecosystems; recreational diversity
- c. Need better words than “thriving place” and “living resources”

■ Mission

- a. After local government, add “Tribes” and “other resource agencies”
- b. Say “support AND COMMUNICATE efforts...”

■ Principles

- a. Clarify that “local governments” includes governments besides counties
- b. Include NGOs
- c. Stress the statewide value of the Conservancy

II. Organizational Goals

■ Effective Organization

- a. Finalize staffing and hiring to implement other organizational goals
- b. Maintain strong local presence in communities
- c. Need effective organization; improve public outreach through multiple media

■ Use and Share Reliable Information

- a. Utilize existing information already developed, so that funds go to projects
- b. Improve existing information on state of Sierra water

■ Increase Knowledge and Capacity

- a. Instead of new assessment, look at SNEP and how it may assist SNC

■ Balanced Portfolio

- a. Need guidelines for equitable distribution of funds
- b. Be inclusive in developing index – include a broad range of associations, groups, and others

■ Funding

- a. Accountability – maintain open financial records
- b. Create database of grant sources to match with projects
- c. Establish a permanent funding source (legislative guarantee)

III. Program Goals

■ Priorities

- a. Priorities for this area emphasize working landscapes, preparedness for natural disasters, and regional economies
- b. Priorities for the overall region are smart growth, air quality and water supply

■ **Program Actions and Approach**

- a. More than protection from natural disasters – preparedness; include county government and local landowners; use local wildfire protection plans
- b. An economic foundation is needed to support tourism; work to attract clean, outside industries
- c. Regional economy needs to address community infrastructure (education, health care); transportation access for all, including elderly and handicapped
- d. Include public education and awareness as a goal (for public, kids, visitors) convey local history to visitors)
- e. Look at programs that would enhance storage and supply of water (e.g. dams) – water supply is a crucial issue
- f. Explore non-traditional economic opportunities from working landscapes, find an economic use for juniper (ethanol, furniture, etc.)
- g. Add “provide services in collaboration, dispute resolution, etc. so that work can get done on the ground to meet vision”

New Insights

I. Vision, Mission, Principles

- a. Include social aspects of communities (education, healthcare, transportation)
- b. For implementation, weigh the value of single-benefit projects so that they can be a program priority

II. Organizational Goals

- a. Need project and program monitoring:
 - Was environment enhanced?
 - Did tourism spending increase?
- b. Look at historical funding statewide over the last 10 years and distribute new funding to under-funded areas.

III. Program Goals

- a. Need different approach to wildfire management on east side of region (different ecosystem); wildfire results in ecosystem being replaced by different plant species
- b. Electronic bulletin board with notification of Sierra activities (festivals, Creek Days, etc.)

*Meeting Highlights prepared by Judie Talbot,
Sacramento State University, Center for Collaborative Policy*